

UNIVERSITY OF ABERDEEN

UNIVERSITY COMMITTEE ON TEACHING AND LEARNING

Minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2005

Present: Dr JG Roberts (Convener), Professor MA Cotter, Dr D Hay, Dr WF Long, Ms C Macaslan, Mr D Marr, Dr I McFarland, Mrs D McKenzie Skene, Professor T Salmon, Mrs L Stephen, Professor DW Urwin, Dr M Young with Ms M Barraclough (vice Professor M Baker & Dr G Walkden) Dr D Comber, Mr JLA Madden, Mrs J McAndrews, Mrs J Wootten, Dr G Mackintosh (Clerk) and Dr R Bernard in attendance.

Apologies for absence were received from Professor M Baker, Dr D McCausland, Dr G Walkden, Dr N Spedding, Dr T Webb, Ms M Wylie,

The Convener welcomed Mrs Wootten who was attending for item 2 on the agenda, and Mrs Barraclough who was attending in place of Professor Baker and Dr Walkden.

The Convener congratulated Mrs Macaslan on her recent appointment as Vice-Principal (Learning and Teaching) with effect from 1 August 2005.

MINUTES

58. The Minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2005 were approved.
(copy filed as UCTL/250305/001)

Update on issues referred to Staffing and Development Committee

- 59.1 The Committee received an extract of the minutes of the meeting of the Staffing and Development Committee, held on 8 March 2005
(copy filed as UCTL/250305/002a)
- 59.2 The Committee received an oral update from Mrs Joy Wootten, Deputy Director (Staff Development), Human Resources on the progress with issues referred by the UCTL to the Staffing and Development Committee.
- 59.3 The Committee noted that the Staffing and Development Committee had agreed that the Proposed Code of Practice for Non-Lecturing Staff Who Teach raised important issues that ought to be addressed and had endorsed the principle that all teachers be appropriately developed, and had invited the Directors of Teaching and Learning and the UCTL to help it with framing an institutional commitment in this area. The Committee agreed to refer this matter back to the Educational Development Sub Committee (EDSC), in the first instance, in order that EDSC may oversee development of proposals for appropriate provision in this area.

Action: Dr Comber & Dr Spedding

- 59.4 Mrs Wootten informed the Committee that during June 2005 the Higher Education Academy (HEA) would be inviting institutions to comment on a model for ensuring appropriate professional standards in learning and teaching within universities, and that the Staffing and Development Committee had agreed to invite staff in the Educational and Staff Development Unit and the Directors of Teaching and Learning to work with the Vice Principal for Teaching and Learning to draft a response on behalf of the University in consultation with the appropriate constituent groups: this would be circulated in draft to the UMG and the UCTL for

endorsement. The Committee noted that the University's provision for probationary staff, via the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education Teaching (PGCertHE), is broadly compliant with both of the draft models circulated by the HEA in advance of the publication of the final model. It was noted, however, that probationary staff are not required to undertake the PGCertHE. The Committee further noted that the University would not comply with either of the draft models in terms of experienced staff, as there is currently no requirement for these staff to undertake continuous professional development activity (minute 18.3 and 59.5 refer).

Action: Dr Comber & Dr Spedding

- 59.5 The Committee then discussed various issues relating to staff development provision for learning and teaching. In particular, the Committee agreed that any moves to require staff to undertake development activity would need to be accompanied by a change in institutional human resources policy, as currently "staff are required to assume responsibility for their own development and training".

ELIR Update

- 60.1 The Convener updated the Committee on the part one visit conducted by the QAA as part of the ELIR process and noted that, in general, the visit had gone more or less as expected.
- 60.2 Dr Mackintosh informed the Committee that the part two visit would last for 4 ½ days, commencing 25 April 2005. The Reviewers had requested a total of eight meetings with different groups of staff. Various senior members of staff had been asked to recommend individuals to attend these meetings; the Vice Principal (Teaching and Learning) would be ultimately responsible for finalising the membership of each group.

Review of Teaching & Learning Strategy Interim Report

- 61.1 Mrs Macaslan presented the Interim Report of the Teaching and Learning Strategy Review Group.
(copy filed as UCTL/250305/003)
- 61.2 Mrs Macaslan highlighted several key aspects of the report, in particular the 'Model of the Learner' developed by the Group. The Committee noted that the Group were working on developing key elements of the strategy, which will then be taken forward over the period of the next five years. The Committee welcomed the emphasis placed on the development of research-led teaching methodologies contained in the Interim Report.
- 61.3 It was further noted that some themes identified in the report had resource implications which, as neither the Review Group nor the UCTL were resource holders, would ultimately need to be referred to the University Management Group.
- 61.4 There was much discussion of the relationship between teaching and research, and the relative value the Institution places on each. Mrs Macaslan agreed that, as part of the Group's work on this relationship, she would liaise with the group currently reviewing the University's reward strategy to ensure that proposals brought by both groups were aligned.

Action: Mrs Macaslan

Student Monitoring – Review of operation of system in first half-session 2004/05

- 62.1 The Committee received a report on the operation of the system for monitoring students' progress during the first half-session 2004/05.
(copy filed as UCTL/250305/004)

62.2 The Committee noted that the amendments to the system introduced at the start of the session 2004/05 had had the effect of substantially reducing the number of reports which were not dealt with. As a direct result of this change there had been an equivalent rise in the number of students being deemed to have withdrawn from courses.

62.3 The Committee recognised the need for a full evaluation of the amended system together with a comprehensive consultation process. It was agreed that it was important that any evaluation exercise should be informed by any feedback received from the current ELIR. Furthermore, the Committee agreed that recommendations regarding student monitoring should be aligned with proposals being made as part of the Review of Teaching and Learning Strategy. The Committee therefore approved the proposal to recommend an extension of the existing trial into the next academic year.

Action: Clerk

62.4 The Committee further agreed that the extended trial should be modified with monitoring continuing until week eleven of teaching. This change was proposed in order to address concerns, which have been raised by some schools, regarding students who cease to attend classes once the period for monitoring has concluded in week nine. Data on the operation of the monitoring system will be analysed in two parts, weeks five to nine, and weeks ten and eleven, in order that data from 2005/06 is comparable with data gathered during 2004/05.

Action: Clerk

Issues arising from Bologna Declaration

63.1 The Committee received a report highlighting the key features of the Bologna Declaration.
(copy filed as UCTL/250305/005)

63.2 The Committee noted that one of the commitments in the Declaration requires that institutions provide all students graduating as from 2005 with the Diploma Supplement. In approving the Institutional Statement for inclusion in the University's European Diploma Supplement, the Committee further noted that, in common with the majority of other institutions across the sector, the University will not be in a position to fully implement the Diploma Supplement in 2005. It was agreed that, as an interim measure, Aberdeen would provide students graduating from July 2005 with the National Description and a description of the University system (as detailed in Annex B to UCTL/250305/005) together with their transcript.

Action: Clerk

63.3 It was agreed that the section of the University system document describing "Access to further study" should be amended to read "The award of an Honours degree (at Second Class Honours or above) or a postgraduate Master's degree would normally allow entry to a PhD programme".

Action: Clerk

63.4 The Committee noted that the University's CAS system is not compliant with the statistical ranking recently proposed by the European Commission for the ECTS Grading System. The Committee agreed that this issue should be considered as part of a wider review of the CAS Scale to be undertaken in 2005/06.

Action: Clerk

Strategic Plan Update – Quality Learning draft targets for 2005/2006

64. The Committee approved the Quality Learning draft targets for 2005/2006 as detailed in paper UCTL/250305/006.

(copy filed as UCTL/250305/006)

In-Course Assessment

65. The Committee approved the proposal to change from using the term 'continuous assessment' on both the SENAS forms and in the Catalogue of Courses when describing those assessments conducted during the course. It had been suggested that this term was misleading in that it implied the assessment was on-going throughout the whole course. It was agreed that the term 'in-course assessment' would be more appropriate.

External Examining

66. The Committee approved the proposed procedures for handling External Examiner approval of amended examination results. The Committee also noted that the issue of External Examiners being offered the opportunity to set examination questions, as detailed in paper UCTL/250305/007, was being referred to the Working Group on External Examiners.

(copy filed as UCTL/250305/007)

Postgraduate Catalogue of Courses

67. The Committee noted that, at the request of the Heads of Graduate School, the Postgraduate Strategy Advisory Group had asked the Registry to include postgraduate taught courses in the on-line Catalogue of Courses as soon as is feasible.

Academic Quality Handbook

68. The Committee noted that the third edition of the Academic Quality Handbook (AQH) was now available at <http://www.abdn.ac.uk/registry/quality>. The latest edition of the AQH had been produced as a web-only version to facilitate updates as they become necessary. The Convener recorded his thanks to Dr Mackintosh and Dr Bernard for their work in producing this latest edition of the AQH.

Enhancement-Led Institutional Review: Nomination of Institutional Reviewers and Review Secretaries

69. The Committee noted that the University had been contacted by the QAA, who were seeking nominations for Institutional Reviewers, Review Secretaries and Student Institutional Reviewers for possible inclusion in review teams for the reviews due to take place between January – May 2006 and during 2006/07.

Operational Plan 2004/05

70. The Committee noted the updated Quality Learning section of the Operational Plan for 2004/05.

(copy filed as UCTL/250305/008)

Higher Quality

71. The Committee noted the March 2005 edition of 'Higher Quality', the bulletin of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
(copy filed as UCTL/250305/009)

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

72. The next meeting would be held on Friday 27 May at 2.00 p.m. in Committee Room 2.